

Praxis Literary Texts and Authors Practice Exam (Sample)

Study Guide



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SAMPLE

Questions

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- 1. In what era is "Beloved" by Toni Morrison set?**
 - A. The Civil War era**
 - B. The Reconstruction era**
 - C. The Harlem Renaissance**
 - D. The Great Depression**
- 2. Gertrude Stein's works in the 1920s are associated with which literary group?**
 - A. The Lost Generation**
 - B. The Beat Generation**
 - C. The Harlem Renaissance**
 - D. The Modernists**
- 3. What is a major theme in "Beloved" regarding memory?**
 - A. Memory as a source of strength**
 - B. The burden of the past**
 - C. Memory as a celebration of life**
 - D. The ease of forgetting**
- 4. What significant structure is found in Dante's "The Inferno" that categorizes sins?**
 - A. Nine Terraces**
 - B. Ten Rings**
 - C. Nine Circles**
 - D. Seven Layers**
- 5. What is a significant theme in Amy Tan's "The Joy Luck Club"?**
 - A. The conflict between cultures**
 - B. The impact of war on families**
 - C. The journey of self-discovery**
 - D. The quest for power**

- 6. Which work is William Thackeray best known for?**
- A. Vanity Fair: A Novel Without a Hero**
 - B. War and Peace**
 - C. Walden**
 - D. Fathers and Sons**
- 7. In what year was "The Life of Samuel Johnson" published?**
- A. 1785**
 - B. 1791**
 - C. 1795**
 - D. 1800**
- 8. Which character in "The Awakening" defies societal expectations?**
- A. A young mother**
 - B. A wealthy businessman**
 - C. A famous artist**
 - D. An elderly woman**
- 9. Who is the author of "Things Fall Apart"?**
- A. James Agee**
 - B. Maya Angelou**
 - C. Chinua Achebe**
 - D. Louisa May Alcott**
- 10. Which author is associated with the play "Waiting for Godot"?**
- A. Arthur Miller**
 - B. Samuel Beckett**
 - C. Tennessee Williams**
 - D. Harold Pinter**

Answers

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- 1. B**
- 2. A**
- 3. B**
- 4. C**
- 5. A**
- 6. A**
- 7. B**
- 8. A**
- 9. C**
- 10. B**

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Explanations

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1. In what era is "Beloved" by Toni Morrison set?

- A. The Civil War era
- B. The Reconstruction era**
- C. The Harlem Renaissance
- D. The Great Depression

"Beloved" by Toni Morrison is set primarily during the Reconstruction era, which followed the Civil War and lasted from the late 1860s to the early 1870s. This period is significant because it deals with the aftermath of slavery, including the struggles of formerly enslaved people as they attempt to navigate their newfound freedom and societal changes. The novel explores themes of trauma, memory, and the lasting impact of slavery, making the Reconstruction era a fitting backdrop as it reflects the social and political challenges faced by African Americans at that time. The focus on this era allows Morrison to delve into the complexities of identity and community rebuilding in a post-slavery context. Through characters and their experiences, she highlights the ongoing struggles and the emotional and psychological scars left by slavery, all of which are central to the narrative of "Beloved."

2. Gertrude Stein's works in the 1920s are associated with which literary group?

- A. The Lost Generation**
- B. The Beat Generation
- C. The Harlem Renaissance
- D. The Modernists

Gertrude Stein is primarily associated with the Modernist literary movement of the 1920s, which sought to break from traditional forms of writing and to explore new techniques and themes in literature. Her experimental style and emphasis on abstraction align with the Modernists' focus on innovation and the exploration of consciousness. Stein's contemporaries included figures such as Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot, who also pushed the boundaries of literary form during this period. While the Lost Generation is a term used to describe a group of American writers who came of age during World War I and were disillusioned by the war, it is more specifically linked to writers like Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald. Stein, however, was part of the broader Modernist movement, which was influential in shaping the 20th-century literary landscape. The Beat Generation, which emerged later in the 1950s, focused on themes of rebellion against conventional society, while the Harlem Renaissance celebrated African American culture and artistic expression in the 1920s. Both of these movements occurred after the initial Modernist period to which Stein's works belong. Therefore, recognizing Stein's contribution to Modernism provides a clearer understanding of her literary significance and the context in which she wrote.

3. What is a major theme in "Beloved" regarding memory?

- A. Memory as a source of strength
- B. The burden of the past**
- C. Memory as a celebration of life
- D. The ease of forgetting

The major theme regarding memory in "Beloved" is the burden of the past. In the novel, characters grapple with their traumatic histories, particularly the horrors of slavery and the oppressive memories that shape their identities and lives. Memory serves as a persistent reminder of their suffering, loss, and the need for reconciliation with their pasts. This theme underscores the idea that while memories can influence strength and resilience, they can also weigh heavily on individuals, making it difficult to move forward. The characters' struggles illustrate how the past continuously impacts their present reality, leading to emotional and psychological challenges. The exploration of memory in "Beloved" emphasizes how the past is inescapable, affecting both individual lives and collective histories. Through the haunting presence of memories, the novel illustrates that an unwillingness to confront these burdens often results in further pain and suffering, thus reinforcing the notion that one must engage with their past to find healing and liberation.

4. What significant structure is found in Dante's "The Inferno" that categorizes sins?

- A. Nine Terraces
- B. Ten Rings
- C. Nine Circles**
- D. Seven Layers

In Dante's "The Inferno," the significant structure that categorizes sins is represented by the Nine Circles of Hell. Each of these circles corresponds to a specific type of sin, organized from less severe to more severe, which reflects Dante's moral philosophy concerning the consequences of sin. This structure is foundational to the narrative and serves to illustrate the process of divine justice and retribution. In the first circle, for instance, reside the virtuous pagans who, though not sinful, are denied Heaven due to their lack of Christian baptism. As one descends through the circles, the severity of the sins increases—ultimately culminating in the final circle, which is reserved for the worst offenders, such as traitors. This thematic layering emphasizes Dante's exploration of morality, redemption, and the nature of humanity's choices. Other options present different numerical structures that do not match the organization in "The Inferno." Therefore, understanding this categorization through the Nine Circles is crucial for grasping the overarching narrative and theological implications within Dante's work.

5. What is a significant theme in Amy Tan's "The Joy Luck Club"?

- A. The conflict between cultures**
- B. The impact of war on families**
- C. The journey of self-discovery**
- D. The quest for power**

A significant theme in Amy Tan's "The Joy Luck Club" is the conflict between cultures. This theme is particularly evident through the interactions and relationships between the Chinese immigrant mothers and their American-born daughters. The generational and cultural divide creates misunderstandings and challenges that shape their identities and familial bonds. The mothers often hold traditional Chinese values and expectations, which can clash with the more modern and individualistic perspectives of their daughters raised in America. This cultural conflict leads to tension, but it also provides a backdrop for growth and understanding as characters navigate their dual identities. Amy Tan intricately weaves personal and cultural narratives, highlighting how cultural differences impact family dynamics and personal development throughout the novel. The other themes present in the story, such as the impact of war on families, the journey of self-discovery, and the quest for power, do play a role in the characters' lives; however, they do not encapsulate the central struggle that defines the relationships and overarching narrative of "The Joy Luck Club" to the same extent that the conflict between cultures does.

6. Which work is William Thackeray best known for?

- A. Vanity Fair: A Novel Without a Hero**
- B. War and Peace**
- C. Walden**
- D. Fathers and Sons**

William Thackeray is best known for "Vanity Fair: A Novel Without a Hero," a satirical novel published in the 1840s. This work is recognized for its rich character development and its critical portrayal of early 19th-century British society, particularly focusing on themes of greed, social climbing, and moral ambiguity. The novel's title references its exploration of vanity and the superficiality of social relationships, making it a significant contribution to Victorian literature. Thackeray's use of a distinctive narrative voice and irony allows for a complex critique of the era's social norms, elevating "Vanity Fair" to a place of prominence among literary classics. In contrast, the other works listed—such as "War and Peace" by Leo Tolstoy, "Walden" by Henry David Thoreau, and "Fathers and Sons" by Ivan Turgenev—are notable yet belong to different authors and literary movements. Each of these works addresses different themes and contexts, which helps to clarify why Thackeray's "Vanity Fair" stands out as his most recognized contribution to literature.

7. In what year was "The Life of Samuel Johnson" published?

A. 1785

B. 1791

C. 1795

D. 1800

"The Life of Samuel Johnson," written by James Boswell, was published in 1791 and is considered one of the most significant biographies in the English language. This work stands out not only for its comprehensive portrayal of Johnson's character and achievements but also for its innovative style, blending biography with anecdotes and conversations. The publication year of 1791 is crucial as it marked a turning point in biographical writing, elevating the genre to new literary heights. The year is important within the context of literary history, as Boswell's meticulous documentation of Johnson's life and thoughts continues to influence writers and biographers to this day.

8. Which character in "The Awakening" defies societal expectations?

A. A young mother

B. A wealthy businessman

C. A famous artist

D. An elderly woman

In "The Awakening" by Kate Chopin, the young mother, Edna Pontellier, stands out as the character who most vividly defies societal expectations. Throughout the novel, Edna grapples with the constraints imposed on her by late 19th-century society, particularly regarding the roles of women as dutiful wives and mothers. Her journey towards self-discovery leads her to reject these traditional roles in favor of pursuing her own desires and individuality. Edna's actions, such as moving out of her husband's home, seeking independence through her art, and exploring her sexuality, illustrate her profound resistance to the societal norms that dictate women's behavior. This rebellion against the prescribed identities of a mother and wife not only highlights her personal struggle but also comments on the broader issue of women's autonomy during that period. As she asserts her own identity, she challenges the expectations of her community, making her the most emblematic character of defiance in the story. In contrast, a wealthy businessman, a famous artist, or an elderly woman may interact with societal norms in various ways, but they often do not encapsulate the themes of rebellion and self-identity that are central to Edna's character.

9. Who is the author of "Things Fall Apart"?

- A. James Agee
- B. Maya Angelou
- C. Chinua Achebe**
- D. Louisa May Alcott

The author of "Things Fall Apart" is Chinua Achebe, a pioneering figure in African literature and a prominent Nigerian novelist. "Things Fall Apart," published in 1958, is widely regarded as one of the most significant works in African literature and tells the story of Okonkwo, a proud Igbo leader, and his struggles with the changes brought by British colonialism and Christian missionaries. Achebe's novel highlights themes of tradition, cultural clash, and the effects of colonialism on indigenous societies. Achebe's unique narrative style and use of proverbs and oral tradition effectively convey the complexities of pre-colonial African life. His work has had a lasting impact on literature and has influenced many writers both within and outside of Africa. By providing an authentic representation of African culture and challenging Western narratives, Achebe has ensured that "Things Fall Apart" remains a seminal text in understanding the colonial experience and its aftermath.

10. Which author is associated with the play "Waiting for Godot"?

- A. Arthur Miller
- B. Samuel Beckett**
- C. Tennessee Williams
- D. Harold Pinter

The play "Waiting for Godot" is famously associated with Samuel Beckett, who is regarded as one of the most significant playwrights of the 20th century. This groundbreaking work, first published in 1948 and premiered in 1953, is a quintessential example of existentialist literature and the Theatre of the Absurd. It explores themes of inaction, the human condition, and the search for meaning, encapsulated in the experiences of its main characters, Vladimir and Estragon, who wait for someone named Godot who never arrives. Beckett's innovative approach to language and form, as well as his careful attention to the subtleties of human behavior, set "Waiting for Godot" apart as a seminal work in modern theatre. His style contrasts sharply with that of authors like Arthur Miller, known for his focus on realistic social issues, Tennessee Williams, who often delves into the complexities of human psychology and emotion, and Harold Pinter, famous for his use of language to convey tension and ambiguity. Beckett's unique contributions to absurdism and existentialism established him as a pivotal figure in literary history, specifically connected to "Waiting for Godot".